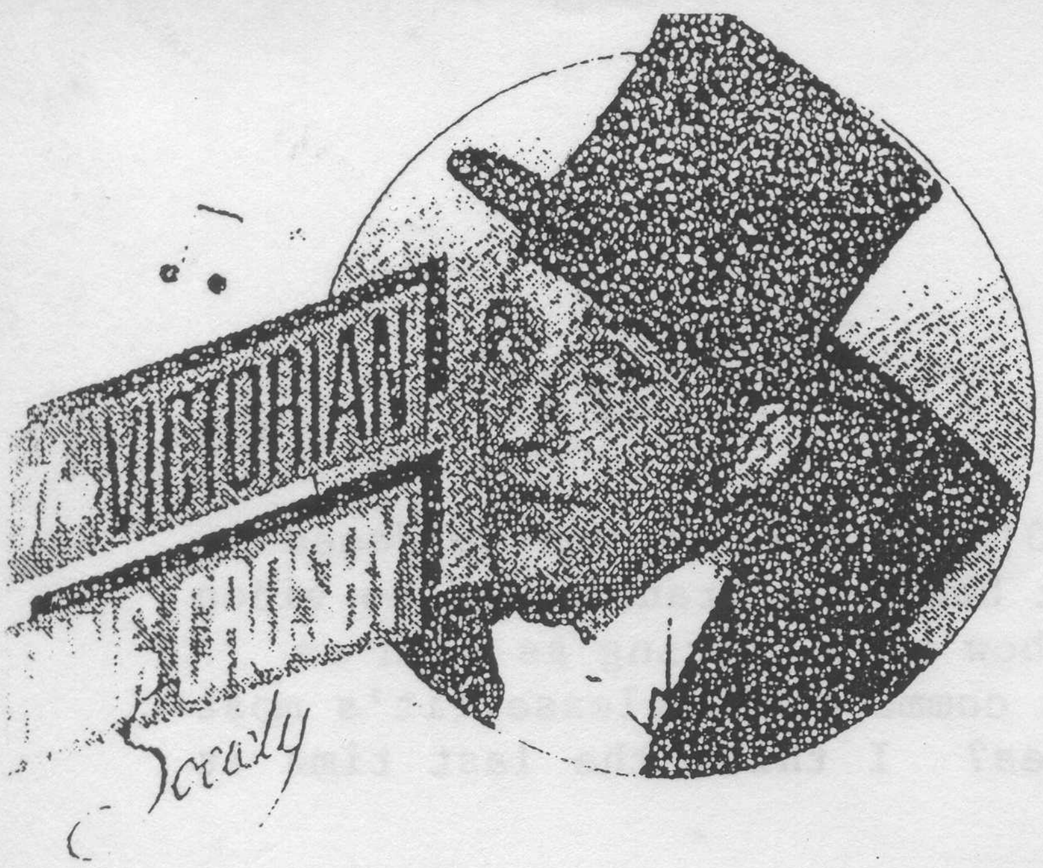

NEWSLETTER - MAY 1993

Hello again.
It's time for our annual get-together with the Al Jolson Society. And so,
on MAY 11
we're screening GOING HOLLYWOOD
plus ROSE OF WASHINGTON SQUARE.

I've always been fond of GOING HOLLYWOOD because it really captures the atmosphere and excitement of the days when Hollywood really was "The movie capital of the world". This is especially true of the first half hour through to the sequence in Grand Central Station. Bing was never in better voice and Marion Davies works well as the romantic interest, despite her expensive elocution lessons showing through. Actually, I think at times that she sounds a little like Marilyn Monroe.

ROSE OF WASHINGTON SQUARE was purportedly based on the life of Fanny Brice and there must have been some truth to the rumours, as Miss Brice sued and won. Al Jolson in a supporting role sings some of his best numbers with all his energy and verve intact, and interestingly, abandons some of the vocal mannerisms that made him sound old-fashioned throughout the 1930s.

Venue, as always, is the AMP Theatrette and the time, as always, is 7.30.

The remaining dates for 1993 are AUGUST 24 OCTOBER 12 DECEMBER 6

* I don't know whether or not it made the local papers, but it's my sad duty to report that the youngest and last of the Crosbys, Bob, has died of cancer at age 80. How many remember that Bob lived here in Melbourne in the early 1960s, bought out by Channel 7 to host a variety programme. From memory, the show wasn't a great success, and Crosby soon returned to the USA. I wonder that if the Victorian Bing Crosby Society had been going then, whether we would have made contact? It's a sobering thought that had Bing lived, he would be 90 this month, as indeed is Bob Hope later in the year. I can't imagine that he would still be working though, which probably means it's better to get your kids to be comedians than singers!

* Channel 10 recently screened HERE COMES THE GROOM on a Saturday afternoon except that all the TV guides described it as the 1934 movie of the same title starring Jack Haley! Great, aren't they. RIDING HIGH was also on and I saw that particular movie written up in one paper as marking the last solo appearance of Oliver Hardy. Um, ah, I know that Ollie makes a cameo appearance, but there was a little more to the movie than that.

* The exciting news is that a print of TOP O' THE MORNING has surfaced in the USA. No real details to hand yet, but it has been transferred to video and we are endeavouring to obtain a copy to show at a meeting as soon as possible. As I understand it, this is not a commercial release (it's most likely an old TV release print) but who cares? I think the last time it was shown here was in the late 1960s.

* Further video news - three of the 'Road' movies have been issued locally on the Rainbow 'label'. The price is right - just $19.95 per tape. They are part of a parcel of Paramount films that include three of the Marx Brothers early features. Can we expect THE BIG BROADCAST one day?

* We borrowed the new video SINATRA recently to see what sort of a job they had done on Frank's life. It's quite entertaining and probably presents a fairly balanced depiction of Sinatra's career, but it has that glossy 'made for TV' look about it. Not that it's low budget by any means - the bill for teenage extras to dress up as bobby-soxers must have been astronomical - but it lacks the atmosphere of film. The lead actor is very good but of the women in Sinatra's life, only the actress playing his first wife Nancy comes across with any conviction. I know it's hard to play a personality whom everyone knows, but the actress cast in the major role as Ava Gardner is woeful - a pale shadow of the original. And as for Mia Farrow, well it's a good thing that the actual lady is currently pre-occupied with legal matters elsewhere! How would you feel being presented as a teenage bubble-head? Bing gets credit as the inspiration for Frank's career and you hear a couple of early tracks, but (thankfully) no attempt is made to depict him on screen. In summary, the tape is worth a look but I think that Sinatra deserves better.

GREAT NEWS FROM DEREK PARKES ON THE 'CROSBY COLLECTORS CLUB'

The balance of this newsletter is devoted to reproducing the most recent Crosby Collectors Club newsheet from our friend Derek Parkes. As you will read, Derek intends going into the record-producing business, if he gets the full support of enough collectors - and that means you. A membership application form is enclosed and also a priority order form which lists a dozen new CDs in the works. A dozen!

It's time for a new discography (or two)

So many non-commercial Crosby tracks have been issued since his death, that it's time that someone set them down on paper. The labels vary from private club issues to 'pirate' LPs and CDs to major companies, and the material ranges from 1930 radio broadcasts to 1977 Palladium concert rehearsals. I hope that someone, somewhere is keeping track of them all. That then raises the question of whether it's time for two discographies - one a 'commercial' listing of recordings that were actually intended for release by the original studio, and two, a 'non-commercial' discography covering everything else. I know that the lines would get blurred in some instances, like that oddity "Nobody" or the 1943 "Mississippi Mud", but these are minor problems. Any volunteers?

And that's where I'll turn this newsletter over to Derek. Until next time,

Dear Members,

It is with great regret that the committee of the Victorian Bing Crosby Society advises members of the death last Tuesday night, April 27, of our founder and President Emeritus, Bob Macliss.

As most Club regualrs know, Bob had fought a long and gallant battle against Motor Neurone disease - continuing, against great odds, to compile the newsletter right up to and including the April issue.

In accordance with his wishes the May 11 Crosby/Jolson Film Night will go ahead as planned, and the V.B.C.S. will continue to operate along its present lines.

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Through Bob's early radio days with 3UZ & 3DB where he ran a nostalgia hour playing music of the 1930s - 1950s (of shich Bob had a great collection & knowledge) started to recreate an interest in this created a lot of interest in this era, especially Bob's background information on Bing Crosby and this created a lot of interest and requests came in for Crosby recordings. An article appeared in the Herald newspaper about Bob's interest in forming a Crosby Society.

Some 17 years ago a meeting was convened at the RSL hall at Carnegie were approximately 50 people attended with Bob being elected President of the victorian Bing Crosby Society, a position which he held, up to his death. After this meeting a 1935 film called "Mississippi" was shown Bing and W.C Fields, this became the format for future meetings, with theClub meeting 6 times a year. The Club also held combined meetings with the Australian Sinatra Society & the Al Jolson Society. The Club also produced 2 LP records, one with the Sinatra society and a Christmas album.

Bob also wrote the Clubs newsletter called"The crosby Voice" which grew to 80 pages and was posted to 480 members throughout the world, up to 4 times a year. Membership covered such countries as Holland, Brazil, Japan,United Kingdom, Greenland, Canada and USA. The Club also had links with the U.K. International Crosby Circle and also Bing Crosby Historical society in Tecoma, Washington. Under Bob's leadership the Australian society became the most active crosby appreciation society throughout the world.

Bob's generosity and enthusiasm for the society and dedication to preserving the memory and music of Bing Crosby was exceptional.

Our deepest sympathy go out to Janet and his family.

Keith Dorman.

KEITH DORMAN.